

Religious Inquirer.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH I. 18.

EDITED BY REV. RICHARD CARRIQUE.—HARTFORD, CONN. J. RUSSELL, PRINTER.

\$1 PER ANN. IN ADVANCE.]

SATURDAY, JULY 20, 1822.

[VOL. I.—NO. XIX.]

From the Boston Universalist Magazine.

The following is from the Anniversary Election Sermon, delivered by Rev. Dan Huntington, before the Governor, Lieut. Governor, Council, and Legislature of Massachusetts, May 29, 1822. It is unnecessary to say, that we most cordially subscribe to the important sentiment of the extracts.

The MEANS which have been used by those who would forcibly control the opinions of others.

"The first step has been, to produce an impression of infallibility, in the person, or the body, assuming the controlling power. They must be resorted to, as the unerring oracle. Claiming the keys of the kingdom, the door to its immunities must be opened or closed by them; and their decisions must be received with the most unwavering confidence.

"Implicit faith, on the part of those to be controlled, is no less necessary, in establishing the desired ascendancy, than infallibility in those who assume the power of controlling. The common people, as if incapable of understanding the word of God, must resign themselves to their teachers. As if blind, they must be led. When led, they must not hesitate to follow. Their reason, their judgment, their conscience, their moral agency; their interests for time and eternity, are no longer at their own disposal. And to have it known that they are not, frequent experiments must be made upon their credulity and good nature. If they hear it inculcated with common ardor, that a few speculative points in theology, are the essentials of religion, no doubts may be entertained. If taught that "all error is fatal," they must believe it. They must often be made to understand, that all the remaining piety on the earth, has taken up its last abode with the people of their denomination; and that to them it belongs exclusively, to preserve and perpetuate sound doctrine and a pure church. It has been found, at some periods, and among some classes of Christians, not too great a stretch of credulity, for the proper exercise of implicit faith, to believe that dishonesty, falsehood, calumny, cruelty, oppression, and wickedness of almost any description is venial, if in practising it, what is called a good object, may be promoted.

"Other notions, similar to this in their spirit and tendency, such as that the correctness of opinions, is to be estimated according to their antiquity and prevalence; and that it is reproachful for a person to change his opinions—have been equally current. Where these expedients have failed of producing the desired effect, others have not been wanting.

"The last resort of the persecuting bigot has been, to compel men to believe right. Aided by mystery, creeds, canons, decrees and councils, with all their appropriate appendages of terror, he commences the dreadful work. If they are few in number, who dissent from the common faith, he avails himself of the vantage-ground afforded him from this circumstance, for exciting, if possible, a general prejudice against them. This is done, by identifying them with every thing odious; by indiscriminate censure; by vague and unfounded charges often repeated; by ungenerous allusions; unjust insinuations; unfair reasonings; and

terrific denunciations. To these have succeeded, vexatious ecclesiastical processes, beginning in making men offenders for a word, and issuing in the highest acts of discipline. Where the times have been favorable, in how many instances has death, in all its dreadful forms, been the consequence of a conscientious adherence to truth?"

The author then proceeds to show that the disposition manifested in these efforts to prevent free inquiry, is not only hateful in itself, but hostile in its effects to the interests of social happiness. After this, he proceeds to inquire, whether the subject admits of an application to ourselves.

"Does the subject, then, admit of an application to our own community?"

"Let the intelligent look at what is passing in many of our Congregations and Churches; in Ecclesiastical Associations and Councils, and answer for themselves.—Let them listen to the voice of clamor and contumely, of terror and exclusion, issuing from the pulpit and the press, and echoing from one extremity of our limits to another, impeaching the purest motives, maligning the fairest characters, and enkindling unjust suspicions among the uninformed. Let them observe the movements of those who set themselves in opposition to every gentle and tolerating measure; let them notice the projects that are put in operation for enlisting partisans, and for augmenting their resources. To gain the control of funds, see them, not only fawning upon the widow, and those who are so unhappy as to be destitute of near relatives, but watching around the dying pillow of the opulent, crying like the house leach, 'give, give;' encouraging the belief, that every cent committed to their disposal, shall be a gem in that crown of glory finally to be bestowed as a reward to the fidelity of their votaries."

And again,

"It is not to be disguised, that in some sections of this enlightened Christian community, there is too much evidence of a disposition for spiritual domination, which is producing in society a perpetual mischief. There are bodies of men, still claiming a jurisdiction as absolute, if not as extensive, as was ever claimed by the most imposing Pontiffs of the dark ages.

"It is what some constantly see, and hear, and feel. We are daily conversant with those, the language of whose conduct is, 'Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou;' and who, considering themselves 'to have attained,' in every necessary qualification, gratuitously assume the prerogative, of dictating to their fellow Christians, on disputed points, what they shall believe. With no superior claims to the necessary means of enlightening their fellow men; having had no more than common advantages for information; having no credentials of any special illumination; from their lives appearing to be, certainly, as much uninspired men as others; and differing as much from one another, as from those, whom they unite in condemning—they seem to be constantly saying to those around them, 'The secret of the Lord is with us,' 'hear his word at our mouths.'

"And if any, after this, in exercising the right of private judgment, fall into 'the way that some call heresy,' the harshest epithets are applied. They are denounced, as introducing 'another Gospel;' as 'Apostates;' as 'Deists in disguise.' If moral, they are accused of mak-

ing a merit of their morality. If pious, it is hypocrisy.

"In all these means, which are used for controlling the right of private judgment, do we not perceive the shattered remnants of the machinery of a once formidable and most mischievous hierarchy? And shall we see our fellow men collecting and arranging these remnants; and endeavoring again to bring them into action, without letting them know, that we are not insensible to their operations, and the evils of them?"

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSALISTS.

The Delegates and Ministers constituting the Western Association of Universalists, assembled in Lee, N. Y. on Wednesday morning, June 5, 1822; and after uniting in solemn thanks and invocation with Br. A. Green, proceeded to the organization of the Council.

1 Appointed Br. William Underwood, *Moderator*.

2 Br. S. R. Smith, } *Clerks.*
Br. G. B. Lisher, }

There were TEN Societies received into fellowship, and two brethren into the fellowship and work of the ministry, (viz) Amos Reed—Job Potter—Br. Reed has been a preacher in the Methodist Connexion.

This Association appears to be in the most flourishing situation.—There are now in fellowship,

62 Societies, and

12 Churches.

There were present 18 brethren in the ministry.

Absent, 15 do.

The following is the Circular Letter, accompanying the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Association.

CIRCULAR.

The Western Association of Universalists, to the Churches and Societies in their fellowship, the believers in like precious faith dispersed abroad, the professors of religion of every name, and to all where this Epistle may come—send salutations of peace:

Brethren—We met in love, were welcomed with cordial affection, worshipped "in the unity of the spirit," and our deliberations were conducted with patience, precaution, faithfulness, and friendship. Grateful to our feeling, was the presence of a large number of representatives, from Societies widely dispersed over an extensive region; and pleasant indeed was the sight of many, till now unknown in our Israel—bearing messages of peace from newly organized Societies and Churches. With very few exceptions, there has been an essential increase of members the past year.—Nor is this addition of numbers, to be traced to those moral and intellectual derangements, which like the swollen and impetuous torrent sweeps with wide waste the fairest works of man, and defaces the beauties of nature; but to the calm and dignified exertion of reason and re-

search, which like the majestic involutions of a mighty stream, bears peace in its bosom, beauty and abundance on its borders, and widely diffuses happiness and joy. From our increase of numbers, community in general, is better informed of the nature and principles of our faith and doctrine; and by the peaceful and moral deportment of our brethren, our sentiments command due attention, and the order suitable respect.—We hail these tokens of liberality as the triumph of reason and religion, over ignorance, error, and prejudice. For, it should not be forgotten, that every attempt to reform the church, and expunge palpable errors and absurdities from confessions of faith, has been considered an unwarrantable innovation: and the instruments and abettors of such reformation, have as uniformly been stigmatised and denounced, the enemies of religion, of God, and of man. Having then in our turn borne the full odium of narrow minds, the rage of zealots, the fury of fanatics, and having been thus taught, the great moral lesson of patience, fortitude, and charity; we neither institute nor celebrate religious festivals in honor of victory, nor triumph in the wounds of our fallen enemies, we thank God, that "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." In proportion to the number of Societies, is the number of Delegates, and attendants on our annual sessions; hence, where a few years since, but "two or three" met in the service of the order, thousands now throng to the sanctuary at the solemn convocation. Where once the harp of praise hung silent, tuneful bands now chaunt in prelibation of immortal joy. The solemn darkness that brooded over the west and south, has been penetrated with "the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds," and rejoicing multitudes now find a Father in their God, an Advocate in the Redeemer, and "joy in the Holy Spirit."

The spirit of inquiry and investigation now so prevalent, opens an ample field to the ministers of the word; such therefore, as can conveniently itinerate, are furnished with every inducement to enter upon that manner of ministration. Few Societies have a resident preacher—and even those few cannot be regularly supplied; hence the general call for more laborers in the vineyard of reconciliation. Thus whilst the different sects are removing supernumerary laborers to Hindostan, and the Islands of the Pacific, and with herculean exertions providing for their maintenance there—we are pained to witness the destitution of gospel ministers in our immediate vicinity. We offer no inducement to our young brethren, to enter the ministry, but those, which duty and the gospel furnish. Say then, ye young men, whom truth has enlightened, grace instructed, and devotion warmed with ardent zeal! have you seen the whitened fields of the great husbandman?—Have you heard his children ask, "Is there not yet a prophet of the Lord?" Have you known,

that there is "famine in the whole land; not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord?" Has not the "still small voice," that whispers to the conscience in tones that make the guilty tremble; or to the obedient in accents "sweet as angels use," said, "go prophecy to my people Israel?" Waiting for the dispensation of divine providence, for the calling and perfecting for the work of the ministry, of those whom God will approve, we seek the fallen mantles of the departed Elijahs, that truth may be suitably illustrated and defended, believers blest with its influence, and God glorified in them that believe.

Brethren, of the Abrahamic faith—Your prosperity and influence depend, not so much on your numbers, as your usefulness; and to that, you are induced by every consideration that can influence the mind, or govern the actions of man. With an assurance of illimitable salvation, you can have no doubts of your own; you will therefore, pity, while you attempt to enlighten those, who from doubts are sinking in despair. You cannot mourn as those "without hope;" you can best offer comfort to the afflicted. You feel the comforts of divine benevolence, you can of course, appreciate your obligations to the stranger, the fatherless, and widow. You know the goodness of God, of his law, the everlasting profusion of his mercies, and you know, that as children of the best parent, you should be the *best children* of that parent. By thus doing you will silence gainsayers, evince your discipleship, and win the confidence and respect of mankind.—Those who profess the gospel, but follow not with us, and those that know not God, we entreat as brethren, to search the Scriptures, to test their own, and our views with the oracles of God, "to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." The brethren who labor in word and doctrine, are reminded of the responsibility of their station. To you, is imparted the dispensation of the Gospel. Make it your study, ascertain the character of its divine Author, and endeavor to understand by whom it was revealed, and for whom it was designed. Let not your parochial, or other public duties infringe on your hours of study, nor permit the closet to keep you from the desk. Visit the sick and the poor, those in health and affluence can dispense with your society better, and it is from the latter, you will have to seek relief for the former, covet the "best gifts," rather than the best support, and the testimony of your own conscience, and the approbation of the wise and good, will secure to you "that peace which the world can neither give nor take away." Finally, brethren, while you testify the grace of God with becoming zeal, be careful to maintain good works, that you may be useful to men, while you sojourn below, an ornament to your profession, to the gospel, and when the "chief Shepherd," shall appear, may you,

and all herein addressed, and all the family of man, be permitted the enjoyment of purity where life and glory are as perfect as durable, where your labors and sufferings shall cease, and love, the life of heaven, consummate your bliss forevermore.—AMEN.

By order,
STEPHEN R. SMITH.

COMMUNICATIONS.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

A concise view of the Westminster Catechism.

NO. III.

In the following number, the dissertation will be concluded. The writer will not be so particular in noticing every answer, as in the preceding numbers. It was his design to omit the Commandments, and he will proceed accordingly.

Twenty-ninth.—We are made partakers of the redemption — by the effectual application of it to us, by his Holy Spirit.—By this it seems that mankind must first be acted upon by something effectual, before they can become partakers of the redemption. We are told, that the sinner does not see his want of redeeming grace, until God manifests it to him; yet mankind are told that they must pray to God, who will give to them of his abundance. Need it be repeated that man, (according to Calvinism,) was possessed (*Twentieth*) of redemption the first moment he drew the breath of life, or he never can or never will be possessed of it? Or, will man, on the *ipse dixit* of others, pray for that whose use he does not perceive, and of whose nature he is entirely ignorant? Yet, those who do not make a manifestation of redeeming grace, are branded with the name of Infidels, by its professors.

Thirtieth.—The Spirit applieth to us the redemption — by working faith in us.—By this it is manifest (according to the Calvinistic doctrine,) that the Spirit first affecteth man; so that it cannot be owing to man, if he is not acted upon by the Spirit, and thereby faith be worked in him, and his sins be (*Thirty-third*) pardoned. The redemption is amply sufficient for the sins of the whole world. Why therefore, did not the Spirit work faith in all mankind that they might thereby be saved, according to the pleasure of God, "who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth?" Certainly not for want of power, for all things are possible with God; certainly not on account of any demerits of the creature.

Thirty-first.—Effectual calling, is the work of God's Spirit, whereby — he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel.—How does it benefit man, that the Gospel be freely offered, if it is not in his power to embrace (*Twentieth*) it, unless it is so decreed from all eternity? But it is absurd to

say a thing is freely offered, when it is not in the power of him to whom it is offered, to embrace or reject it.

Thirty-second to Thirty-eighth are omitted.

Thirty-ninth.—The duty which God requires of man, is, obedience to his revealed will.—The Calvinists virtually deny this, in teaching mankind obedience to God's secret will. And we should very well like to know how, and where, they obtained a knowledge of God's secret will.

Fortieth to Eighty third are omitted.

Eighty-fourth—Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.

Whatsoever comes to pass, is (*Seventh*) decreed by God.

Sin comes to pass, i. e. is committed.

Ergo—Sin is the effect of the unchangeable decrees of God. Will God punish man for acting as he had decreed he should? But in the Thirteenth, it is said that the Spirit worketh faith in us,—in the Thirty-third, that God pardoneth all our sins only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us by faith.—Now if all men are not saved, according to your own premises, it is by the neglect of God, for the righteousness of Christ is sufficient for the sins of the whole world.

It is hoped the Calvinists will not be displeased at the liberty with which these remarks have been written. If this Catechism contains correct sentiments, we have been greatly deceived as to the character of God. We have thought God to be a just, merciful, and impartial Being, who wills the happiness of all men, not a single individual excepted—whereas in this system of Calvinistic faith, God is represented as a capricious tyrant, partial, domineering over his creatures with the utmost severity, and having elected one part for mansions of everlasting bliss, and consigning the other part to scenes of never ending woe, without any other reason than a capricious whim. If any one will convince us that this system is correct and consistent with itself, we will publicly recant all we have said against it. But we are assured they cannot, and we hope that a system so fraught with absurdities and contradictions, will soon be laid aside.

N——.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Mr. Editor,

Although this subject has been repeatedly and ingenuously discussed in the columns of the *Inquirer*, yet such is its vital importance, that with great propriety the question may still be reiterated—"what is truth?"—Truth then, is that which will save every one of the human race, when, and as soon as they come to the knowledge and belief of it.—My limits will not admit a quotation of the numerous passages of Scripture which bear

me out in this assertion.—Every one must, and will acknowledge that there is no injunction more frequently and more forcibly urged upon sinners, than to believe the truth—to know and embrace the truth—to believe to the Salvation of their souls: the exercise of this faith, or this belief, is the great work that sinners have to perform.—This "*work of faith*," is the only condition of their salvation.—It is all they have to do to secure, not the favor of God, for this was always sure; but the perfect enjoyment of his favor. This faith, when genuine, is always attended by its appropriate works; for it *works by love*. It is a tree that bears pleasant fruit—"a good tree [which] cannot bring forth evil fruit." Well then, as all men are required to believe the truth and be saved; it proves beyond any reasonable doubt, that there is saving truth for all: for surely God would not require sinners to believe the truth and be saved, when there was no saving truth for them to believe. Neither does he require them to believe a falsehood, in order to make it true by their believing it.—No, it is *gospel* truth they are required to believe; or, as the Apostle describes it, "the truth of God;" and therefore eternal truth, and that which cannot be made void by a temporary unbelief—"For what if some did not believe, shall their unbelief make the faith [or truth] of God without effect? God forbid!" So that we can no more obliterate and extinguish this eternal truth of God by refusing to believe it, than we can put out and extinguish the great luminary of day, by closing our eyes upon his genial rays. How absurd then, is the Calvinistic, or Limitarian scheme; according to which, it is certainly true that a great proportion of the human race will never be saved: and if so, then certainly there is no saving truth for *them*—and yet they entertain a strange idea, that God, under these circumstances, requires them to believe, to the salvation of their souls! and that he will damn them to all eternity for their unbelief! But in the name of common sense, and common humanity, I would ask, *what is there* for sinners, the non-elect, to believe, which can save them? Alas! not the truth, certainly; but if there is any thing, the belief of which, can make these *forlorn and pitiable* objects at all comfortable, it must be a downright falsehood; for if it were possible, upon this hypothesis, for them to come to the knowledge of the truth, and realize it; instead of proving their salvation—instead of making them "*free indeed*," it must sink them at once into the very depth of despair! How then, can Limitarians disentangle their minds from this dilemma? How, but to give full credit to the declaration of the Apostle, that *God our Saviour*, in the plenitude of his goodness, will in "*due time*" bring "*all men*" to the saving "*knowledge of the truth*."

"Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding."

FOR THE INQUIRER.

Arminians are shocked at the doctrine of God's decrees, because of the cruelty of eternal damnation; not considering that an ill-founded belief in endless misery, constitutes the only difficulty in their believing in divine benevolence, that essential attribute of Deity. I would ask, is endless, interminable misery, less dreadful in the view of Arminians, than of Calvinists? Would not their scheme, if possible, rather enhance it to the wretched sufferer? Calvinists make it a fatality, barbarous indeed, beyond all conception; but what there is no possibility of avoiding. But Arminians would add to this, the bitter anguish of self-reproach, for not escaping the "*regions of sorrow*,"—these "*doleful shades, where hope never comes*,"—Calvinists stigmatize the *blessed and only potentate*, as the efficient cause of all these heart-rending sorrows. Arminians, struck at the monstrous absurdity of this, make futile and idle attempts to distinguish between his decrees and his knowledge; and yet they make the direful approaching catastrophe—the horrid result of things, no less dreadful and deplorable! How natural is it to inquire, can these doctrines, so full of death and damnation, comport with the *glorious gospel of the blessed God? which is good news*; and which comes prefaced with an assurance of the abolition of death—"Who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." Believers in these doctrines, for there is no material difference, say, a vast proportion of the human race—countless millions, is a phrase common with each sect, are to be miserable—Arminians say, certainly *will be*—and Calvinists hold *must be* damned! What a sentiment! How poisonous to our comforts! What a bitter alloy to our best enjoyment! and what a deadly blow it aims at the very vitals of *all* rational felicity! Can Calvinists then, or can Arminians, join the heavenly music, which chaunted this *good news*—this all-important discovery to bewildered man? Impressed and haunted with this terrific belief, can a solitary individual of the human race, bear a part in the celestial anthem, which on that great occasion will be suddenly struck up by a multitude of the heavenly hosts; praising God, and saying, *glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will to men. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth; and such as are in the sea; and all that are in them, heard I; saying, blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

FOR THE INQUIRER.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

Ephesians ii. 8.

As this text has been construed very differently by different denominations of Christians, I have thought proper also to give my opinion. Whether

this text is pointed according to the rules of punctuation or not, I shall not pretend to decide; but merely observe, that if I were called upon to punctuate it, I should include the words "*through faith*," in a parenthesis—especially, as the Apostle makes a similar declaration in the 5th verse of the same chapter, wherein he observes, "*by grace are ye saved*"

By the least reflection we shall perceive that our existence here is owing entirely to the will of God.—Our life is the gift of God without any condition being performed anterior to our being—and our existence beyond the grave, rests on the same *eternal basis*. For if faith, or belief, must be exercised here in order to entitle us to a happy existence hereafter, I would inquire, how are the millions of infants, idiots, and heathen, to be saved? Is it not as much impossible for either of these to exercise faith, as it would be for the Christian to do meritorious acts previous to existence? Notwithstanding the above text is so plain and evident that he that runneth may read and understand, yet many of the clergy have labored much to convince us that *faith* is the gift of God. They have divided the subject into two heads—saving faith, and speculative faith.

The former, according to the Calvinistic creed, consists in believing in the doctrine of Election, &c. themselves included in the happy number. Speculative faith, I apprehend, consists in acting the hypocrite, by pretending to believe, without evidence.

Some of our profound grammarians and theologians have contended that the pronoun "*it*," in the latter clause of the above text, has for its antecedent *faith*, and consequently *faith* is the gift of God. Let this for a moment be granted. How will they reconcile the attributes of Jehovah in condemning the creatures of his power to everlasting torments for *not possessing that faith* which he in his infinite wisdom is pleased to withhold. If *faith* is the *gift of God*, how shall any one obtain it, unless God is pleased to bestow it?

The truth is, *faith* or belief, is the assent of the mind to facts that are self-evident, or to propositions that are capable of demonstration. And whenever the fact or proposition is presented and fully understood, the belief is inevitable—it is of necessity. Cause and effect, are connected in the operations of the mind in the same manner they are throughout the whole of universal nature. If then, the principles of the mind are so established by the God of truth and justice, that our belief depends entirely upon the weight of testimony, and irresistably follows whenever the evidence is presented, I would inquire, where is the merit of believing, or in pretending to believe that which is physically impossible? On the other hand, whenever the testimony adduced in support of any proposition or alleged fact, is *contradictory, irrational, and inconsistent*, DISBELIEF is sure to be the result. How idle and absurd to

suppose that a God of infinite perfections should have constituted us in this manner, and then call on us to believe that which is utterly impossible! Besides, if Christ is not the Saviour of *all* men, we cannot perceive why we are called upon to believe that which is untrue. From the above position it is very evident that belief, can have no agency in the salvation of a great proportion of mankind, viz. infants, idiots, &c. But the advantages resulting from a well regulated belief, are numerous and great; but are they not also of a temporal nature? The Apostle expressly declares that it is "not of yourselves that ye are saved;" your salvation is the gift of God—or grace which accomplishes your salvation, is the gift of God. Grace is one of the peculiar prerogatives of Omnipotence; and when first exercised towards us, it bestows upon us being, and enjoyment here, and to the same infinite grace shall we be indebted for joys inexpressible beyond the grave.

Grace is a bestowment without merit; it is emphatically the gift of God. How idle and inconsistent to attend to the performance of a certain round of outward ceremonies with a view of purchasing eternal blessedness, which is solemnly declared by the Apostle to be the gift of God. Let us, however, attend to all the duties of morality—to the practice of every virtue—for the temporal interest, both of ourselves and those connected with us—but let us rely on the goodness, grace, and power of God for salvation.

A LAYMAN.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

Of the explication of the Scriptures.

(No. 9. Continued from page 140.)

The corruption of Christianity by the first christian philosophers, arose from two causes; First, the application of their subtle and sophistical learning to the Scriptures. And, secondly, by the direct incorporation and intermixture of heathenism with the Christian system.

The abstruse and dark learning, and metaphysical discussions of the ancient philosophers, applied to the Scriptures, produced the most incalculable evils; the simplicity of revelation was at once destroyed, and the whole system involved in darkness and mystery. The principles of reasoning, known in their systems, and the methods of explaining the fables and mysteries of heathenism were applied to the Scriptures. The former started a thousand nice points, subtle distinctions, dark and unintelligible propositions, which occasioned endless scholastic disquisitions, violent disputations, and finally ended in the dogmas, which were afterwards formed into creeds and articles of faith. The latter lead to the allegorical mode of interpreting the Scriptures, which was borrowed from the practice of explaining the Grecian mysteries.—The practice of allegorising the

Scriptures is considered as having originated with Origen, although it is probable that some of his predecessors had prepared the way for its introduction.—From his time, the early part of the third century, this practice became general, among the Christian writers. No wonder this insatiable scribbler left three hundred Books behind him, for the principle of explaining the scriptures which he had adopted and reduced to practice, had opened a field as unbounded as the ingenuity of man, and the aberrations and fancies of the human mind. He had broken down the landmarks between truth and falsehood, overturned the principles of investigation, destroyed revelation, by rendering it arbitrary and uncertain, and set every thing afloat upon the vast ocean of vague speculation.—To give to Scripture an allegorical character, was to render it any thing, and every thing, which the weakness of man, the dreams of fanaticism, or the vagaries of a disordered imagination might make it.

This allegorical mode of explaining the Bible, gave rise to the most ridiculous reviews, and the most preposterous extravagancies. It exposed Christianity to the severest sarcasms and reproaches, from the Pagan and Jewish writers, and formed an almost insuperable obstacle to its progress.

An allegorical character having been given to Scripture, there was nothing too absurd to be proved by it. The *three days* which Jonah remained in the belly of the whale, was a type, and afforded proof of the *three* persons in the Godhead, or the doctrine of the Trinity; so also was the *six days* in which God created the world, being *twice three*. The Divines of Cohen actually wrote a book, and attempted to prove from the Scriptures that Aristotle was the forerunner of Christ, with respect to the mysteries of nature, as John the Baptist had been as to the mysteries of grace.

Every thing done under the Mosaic law, recorded in the Old Testament, has been considered as typical of the dispensation of the Gospel—even the most plain historic facts. The assassination of Abel by his brother, has been regarded as a prophetic figure of Jesus put to death by his own countrymen; and the sacrifice of Isaac, which however, never took place, was deemed the type and image of that accomplished on the Cross.

It is admitted that this allegorical interpretation of the Jewish books, has interposed the most serious difficulty to the conversion of the Jews. The books of the ancient Rabbies, many of whom were men of great learning, written at an early period of Christianity, all of them attack the allegorical interpretations of the Christian Fathers, which they exhibit in a ridiculous light. It appeared very strange and absurd to them, that the early Christian writers should have discovered in the Law and Books of the Jews, what the most learned of their own nation had never perceived,

nor dreamed of. The celebrated English divine, Whiston, says, "The allegorical interpretations given by Christian expositors of the prophecies, are the grand obstacle and stumbling block in the way of the conversion of the Jews."

This conduct in the early Christian writers, exposed not only themselves, but Christianity, to great ridicule and reproach.—Celsus, who was a most active opposer of Christianity, charges the ancient Fathers, of "endeavoring, by the most astonishing folly, and stupidity without example, to find out relations between things for which there was not the least foundation."—The same objection was made by Porphyry, a very learned author, who wrote many books against the Christians, all of which have been destroyed except some fragments that were preserved in the ancient Fathers. The following extract from this writer found in Eusebian's Ecclesiastical History, shows that this false manner of interpreting the Scriptures, was one of the principle causes of the opposition with which they met, and also proves the origin of this practice. Speaking of the Christian Fathers, he says,

"For vaunting in great words, that what Moses spoke with all imaginable plainness, are *dark riddles*, they enthusiastically give them out as so many divine oracles, pregnant with *hidden mysteries*; and after confounding the judgment with this sublime language, they deliver their own explanations. For an example of this folly, let us take Origen, a person with whom I had some acquaintance when I was very young. He was then, and still remains in great esteem with the teachers of this doctrine, who loudly spread his fame, for the volumes he left behind him.—As for his opinion concerning the Divinity and other things, he was a *disciple of the Greek philosophers*, and endeavored by their principles to support the exotic fables of the Jews. Moreover, the *writings of Plato were never out of his hands*; nor those of Numanus Cronius, Apollonphanus, Longinus, Moderatus; nor those of Nechomachus, and [the works] of the most celebrated Pythagoreans.

"He read likewise, the books of Cheremon the Stoick, and of Cornutus, of whom, having learned the allegorical method of explaining the Grecian mysteries he did accommodate it to the writings of the Jews."

He, it is true, is a Pagan author, but he speaks of facts about which he could not well be mistaken, being a cotemporary with Origen; and the accuracy of this statement is admitted and confirmed by numerous learned orthodox Christian writers.—The principle of allegorising revelation is then of *Pagan origin*; for revelation cannot require *unriddleing*, or revealing a second time.—But this was not the only thing borrowed from heathenism by the Christian sophist. We see from what source he derived his notions concerning Divinity, and the other points of theology.—The writings of Plato were never out of his hands;

nor those of the most celebrated Pythagoreans. He did not throw aside or reject these works, or the systems which they defended; for if so, he could have no occasion to read them. Was he not then, a Pagan philosopher as much after he embraced Christianity, as before? He retained all his former notions, and pursued the same studies; the only difference was, that he had adopted the Christian system too, and confounded the whole together. It is thus that Christianity was mingled and confounded with the notions of Plato, and of Zoroaster, Pythagoras, and the Grecian and Oriental mysteries.

TRENCHARD.

Religious Inquirer.

HARTFORD, SATURDAY, JULY 20, 1822.

SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

[Concluded from page 127.]

In concluding this subject, we notice particularly the expression in Mark—"hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." This form of expression is much relied on, by the advocates of endless misery, as fully proving that sentiment.—But the reader is to be informed that the word which is here rendered "eternal," by our translators, is the same as used by Matthew and rendered "WORLD." They will readily see that it would have been absurd, to have said a "a world of damnation,"—but they might with as much propriety have thus rendered it.—If this word in the Greek, used both by Matthew and Mark, signifies AGE, as before proved by indisputable authority, then the passage will read thus—"but is in danger of an age of damnation"—or "an age of punishment."—Mark uses the Greek word twice in Chap. iii. 29. One is translated "NEVER," the other "ETERNAL," which makes the passage read—"hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."

Wakefield, in his translation of the New Testament thus renders the passage—"But whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, he has no forgiveness in this AGE, but is danger of eternal punishment."—This reading comes nearer to that in Matthew. The amount of it is, as before stated, The Jews as a nation, or in a national point of view committed this sin, in charging the Redeemer with performing his miracles by the agency of the devil. "They said, he hath an unclean spirit!" This same malignant disposition was displayed in all their opposition to Christ and his gospel, through all his ministration. It was this spirit, which cried out "crucify him—crucify him;"—and when Pilate, desirous of releasing Jesus, washed his hands and pronounced him innocent, the same spirit cried out "his blood be on us, and on our children."—The judgments of God came upon them and upon their children.—

Great were the calamities they had to endure—"there was great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be again."—They still suffer, and are in a state of blindness, having stumbled at the stumbling-stone.

That the Jews will be restored to favor and enjoy the blessings of the gospel, the Scriptures clearly prove.—When the Saviour wept over Jerusalem, beholding the calamities that hung over their heads, he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how oft would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not: Behold your house is left unto you desolate."—Thus far the believers in the endless misery of mankind frequently read, or recite, to prove that those people will be for ever lost—and to show what the Saviour would have done if he could—but the residue is generally left out of sight and not noticed. It reads thus, "For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—That the time will come, when they shall thus say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," is ably argued by the Apostle in the 10th and 11th of Rom. This is his reasoning—"I say then, have they (i. e. the Jews) stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles; for to provoke them to jealousy; For if the casting away of them (the Jews) be the reconciling of the world; what shall the receiving of them (the Jews) be, but life from the dead."—Again, For "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits,) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: As it is written, There shall go forth out of Zion the DELIVERER, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they [the Jews] are enemies for your [the Gentiles] sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."—"For," saith he, "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

ORTHODOX CATECHISM.

Question. What is Christianity?

Answer. The system of divine grace unfolded in the Scriptures.

Q. Of what does this system of grace inform us?

A. Of the eternal will and purpose of God to save all mankind; of the redemption of all, in pursuance of that purpose; and that a large proportion will be eternally damned, notwithstanding.

Q. What is faith?

A. Believing what you are told by orthodox divines, without examination, and without evidence.

Q. What is orthodoxy?

A. Those systems of faith which are supported by authority, in opposition to reason; which are so ancient, as to have become entirely purified of the heretical character which all new systems possess.

Q. In what does piety consist?

A. In believing that a large portion of mankind will and must be damned; that God hath decreed it—that justice requires it—and in making a great noise about saving them notwithstanding.

Q. In what consists the right of conscience?

A. In worshipping God according to your own notions of Scripture and propriety—and in denying these rights to all others.

Q. What is toleration?

A. Freedom from persecution, with the privilege of persecuting others.

Q. Where is orthodox faith to be learnt?

A. In creeds, articles, and catechisms, but not in the Scriptures.

Q. Has the Constitution of the U. States, and of this State, given to all Christians equal civil privileges?

A. All Christians are placed upon equal footing; but the orthodox have certain peculiar rights and privileges, not recognized by the civil law; this "is a mystery which none but those who have spiritual eyes, can see through."

QUESTIONS.

For the Believers in Endless Misery.

Would an infinitely holy, wise, and just God, affix a penalty to his law, which was entirely out of his power ever to inflict?

If this is answered in the negative, we inquire, at what particular period, or in what number of years, can it be said that man has received a portion, or part of his punishment?

If man receives a part of his punishment, at any given period of time, must he not in time, however procrastinated, receive the whole amount?

If man can, or shall ever receive the whole penalty, will there not be an end of punishment?

DIED.

In Wrentham, Mass. On the 4th inst. Mr. Silas Metcalf, in the 76th year of his age.

In justice to his memory, it may with truth be said, that those virtues which commend the husband, the father, the citizen, and the Christian, shone conspicuously in his manner of life. For many years he professed a belief in the doctrine of Universal Salvation, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures; and in this faith, and under its firm support, he patiently endured his last, lingering, wasting sickness, and met death without a murmur and without a fear.—May his death be sanctified to his family and his friends, and may the faith, which gave him support and consolation in death, be their happy inheritance until they rejoin his society in the mansions of rest.—*Univer. Mag.*

In Attleborough, Mass. June 25th. Mrs. Avis Fales, consort of Mr. Peter Fales, aged 74. Mrs. Fales has been a believer in the doctrine of God's universal benevolence for more than forty years. During the last years of her life, she was afflicted with a cancer, which produced much pain and distress, and gradually wasted her frame;—but her faith was strong in the Lord, and her hope, founded on the Rock of Ages, was as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.—Rejoicing even in death, she closed her eyes in the full assurance of life and immortality—and left the fullest evidence that a belief in Universal Salvation can give peace to the soul, and enable it to leave this frail tenement of clay, triumphing in the victories of the Cross. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

NOTICE.

Having been under the necessity of reprinting several of the first numbers of the "Inquirer," those who may wish to become subscribers can be furnished with a complete FILE OF THIS PAPER.

PUBLISHED SEMI-MONTHLY, AT \$1 PER ANN. IN ADVANCE, A FEW RODS SOUTH OF THE LITTLE BRIDGE.